

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 HA-05 ACDA-12 PM-05
SP-02 SS-15 L-03 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 DODE-00
SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 /088 W
-----093842 181314Z /42

O P 180918Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7468
INFO AMEMBASSY DAKAR PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LAGOS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ABIDJAN 1691

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, RH, XA, XJ
SUBJECT: HOUPHOUET'S REACTION TO RHODESIAN
DEVELOPMENTS

1. WHEN I MET YESTERDAY AFTERNOON WITH PRESIDENT HOUPHOUET-BOIGNY TO DELIVER PRESIDENT CARTER'S MESSAGE (SEPTELS), I ASKED HIM IN COURSE OF CONVERSATION WHAT HIS REACTION WAS TO REPORTS FROM SALISBURY THAT IAN SMITH HAD REACHED AGREEMENT WITH MUZOREWA AND SITHOLE ON TERMS FOR "INTERNAL SETTLEMENT" OF RHODESIAN PROBLEM.

2. HOUPHOUET SAID IMMEDIATELY THAT WHILE HE DID NOT RPT NOT KNOW EXACTLY WHAT MUZOREWA AND SITHOLE HAD AGREED TO, HE THOUGHT THAT ANYTHING THAT WOULD LESSEN THE DANGER OF MORE BLOODSHED WAS A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.

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HOUPHOUET BELIEVED THAT MUZOREWA IN PARTICULAR HAD CONSIDERABLE SUPPORT AMONG RHODESIAN BLACKS WHO WOULD NOT RPTNOT THEREFORE AUTOMATICALLY REGARD AGREEMENTS

REACHED BY MUZOREWA WITH SMITH AS A SELL-OUT. THE EXTENT OF POPULAR SUPPORT ENJOYED BY NKOMO AND MUGABE, ON THE OTHER HAND, WAS YET TO BE DEMONSTRATED. THEY WERE CERTAINLY

SUPPORTED BY THE FRONT LINE STATES, BUT THAT WAS NOT RPT
NOT THE SAME THING.

3. I OBSERVED THAT IN THE LIGHT OF IAN SMITH'S DEVIOUS
NEGOTIATING HISTORY, IT SEEMED TO BE PRUDENT TO BE
SKEPTICAL ABOUT HIS PROFESSED COMMITMENT TO MAJORITY
RULE IN RHODESIA. HOUPHOUET SAID THAT IF SMITH WAS
NEGOTIATING IN BAD FAITH, THIS WOULD BECOME CLEAR IN DUE
COURSE. MEANWHILE, HOUPHOUET BELIEVED THAT IT WOULD BE
A MISTAKE TO CONDEMN IN ADVANCE THE AGREEMENTS REACHED
WITH MUZOREWA AND SITHOLE. THE PATRIOTIC FRONT, HE
CONTINUED, WOULD AUTOMATICALLY CONDEMN THESE AGREEMENTS
FOR THEIR OWN POLITICAL REASONS. THEY WOULD USE THE
THREAT OF RENEWED AND INTENSIFIED GUERRILLA WARFARE AS
A WAY OF PREVENTING ANY SETTLEMENT WHICH DID NOT GUARANTEE
THEM THE LION'S SHARE OF POWER IN AN INDEPENDENT ZIMBABWE.

4. I SAID THAT THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PROPOSALS STILL
REPRESENTED THE BEST HOPE FOR A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT.
A PARTIAL SETTLEMENT, EXCLUDING NKOMO AND MUGABE, WOULD
RUN THE RISK OF PITTING NATIONALIST LEADERS AGAINST EACH
OTHER AND LEADING TO THE KIND OF CONFLICT THAT WAS
CONTINUING IN ANGOLA. HOUPHOUET SAID THAT A PARTIAL
SETTLEMENT DID NOT RPT NOT HAVE TO BE INCOMPATIBLE WITH
A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT OF THE KIND ENVISAGED IN THE
ANGLO-AMERICAN PROPOSALS. WHAT WAS IMPORTANT AT THIS
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STAGE WAS TO EXAMINE CAREFULLY AND OBJECTIVELY THE TERMS
OF THE SO-CALLED INTERNAL SETTLEMENT TO SEE HOW THESE
RELATED TO THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PROPOSALS. IF THE AGREEMENTS
REACHED BY SMITH WITH MUZOREWA AND SITHOLE LED TO A BLACK
INTERIM GOVERNMENT IN RHODESIA AND FREE ELECTIONS, THIS
WOULD BE A POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT. "DON'T LET YOURSELVES
BE BLACKMAILED BY THE PATRIOTIC FRONT," HE SAID. THE
ONLY SETTLEMENT THAT WOULD LAST IN RHODESIA WAS ONE WHICH
ENJOYED POPULAR SUPPORT -- BLACK AND WHITE -- WITHIN
RHODESIA.

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FM AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7469

INFO AMEMBASSY DAKAR PRIORITY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ABIDJAN 1691

5. I SAID THAT IT SEEMED TO ME EQUALLY IMPORTANT THAT A SETTLEMENT BE ACCEPTED BY NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES WHICH WOULD HAVE TO LIVE WITH AN INDEPENDENT ZIMBABWE AND WHOSE SUPPORT AND UNDERSTANDING WOULD BE NECESSARY IN A VARIETY OF AREAS. WE WOULD CERTAINLY AGREE WITH HOUPHOUET THAT ANY SETTLEMENT WHICH PITTED NATIONALIST LEADERS AGAINST EACH OTHER WOULD BE UNDESIRABLE. THIS WAS WHY WE WOULD BE RELUCTANT TO ENDORSE A SETTLEMENT WHICH EXCLUDED THE PATRIOTIC FRONT FROM PLAYING A POLITICAL ROLE IN AN INDEPENDENT ZIMBABWE.

6. HOUPHOUET'S LAST WORD ON THE SUBJECT WAS TO SAY THAT IN HIS OPINION IT WOULD BE PREMATURE EITHER TO REJECT OR TO ENDORSE THE AGREEMENT REACHED LAST WEEK IN SALISBURY UNTIL THE EXACT TERMS WERE KNOWN AND A CONSIDERED JUDGMENT COULD BE MADE ON HOW THEY RELATED
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TO THE SETTLEMENT OUTLINED IN THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PROPOSALS.

7. COMMENT: IT IS OBVIOUS THAT HOUPHOUET IS DISPOSED TO INTERPRET RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN RHODESIA IN A POSITIVE LIGHT. HE FEARS THAT MUGABE AND NKOMO, PERHAPS UNDER SOVIET INFLUENCE, WILL PLAY THE ROLE OF SPOILERS. UNLESS HOUPHOUET BECOMES CONVINCED THAT SMITH IS NEGOTIATING IN BAD FAITH, WE CAN EXPECT HIM TO ENCOURAGE OTHER AFRICAN MODERATES TO SUPPORT -- OR AT LEAST NOT TO OPPOSE -- EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE AN INTERNAL SETTLEMENT. CONSEQUENTLY, IT WILL BE IMPORTANT FOR US TO REMAIN IN CLOSE TOUCH

WITH HOUPHOUET ON THIS ISSUE. WE CANNOT AFFORD TO DRIFT
APART SINCE HOUPHOUET'S CAUTIOUSLY FAVORABLE ATTITUDE IS
LIKELY TO BE SHARED BY OTHER AFRICAN MODERATES.
STEARNS

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Message Attributes

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